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UNITED STATES INDIAN OFFICE.

CORRESPONDENCE

ON THE SUBJECT OF

TEACHING THE VERNACULAR

IN

INDIAN SCHOOLS.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
UNITED STATES INDIAN OFFICE,
April 16, 1888.

TO ALL INDIAN AGENTS:

In view of the many misunderstandings that have arisen on the subject of the order of the Indian Office forbidding the teaching of any Indian vernacular in schools on reservations, I have deemed it proper to print the accompanying correspondence, which gives the true intent and meaning of the order, for the information and guidance of those who are charged with the management of Indian schools.

Very respectfully,

J. D. C. ATKINS,
Commissioner.

CORRESPONDENCE.

UNITED STATES SENATE,
Washington, D. C., March 9, 1883.

Hon. WILLIAM F. VILAS,
Secretary of the Interior.

MY DEAR SIR: I transmit herein a letter just received by me from Judge John E. Ryland, of Lexington, Mo., judge of the criminal court of their circuit there, composed of three of the largest counties in Missouri, and secretary of the La Fayette County Bible Society, and resolutions of that society inclosed therein. Please examine the same. I do most earnestly trust that after a conference with General Atkins some modification may be made of the orders and regulations of the Indian Office that will, if not entirely, yet to a very great extent, remove the grounds of criticism in these resolutions, and tend to remove the dissatisfied and, in many cases, indignant feeling existing with some of the very best people of our country against the rules and regulations referred to.

Yours, very truly,

F. M. COCKRELL.

LEXINGTON, MO., *March 5, 1888.*

HON. F. M. COCKRELL,

United States Senate.

DEAR SIR: At the annual meeting of the La Fayette County Bible Society, which is auxiliary to the American Bible Society, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted, and I was directed to send a copy to you, as one of our Senators.

The meeting was a large and enthusiastic one, comprising many of our most intelligent citizens, and the resolutions fairly expressed our sentiments on this delicate and very vital question.

I trust that the Indian Commissioner's order may be modified so as to give no cause of offense or alarm to any one.

With respect, yours, truly,

JOHN E. RYLAND,
Secretary.

Whereas some months ago the Commissioner of Indian Affairs issued an order on his own responsibility "rigidly and positively forbidding the giving of instruction in the Indian language" and the use in the Indian schools of any book, even the Bible, printed in the vernacular, and threatening peremptorily to close every private or missionary school that failed to obey his order;

And whereas in November last a delegation, representing the American Bible Society and a number of missionary and other benevolent societies and persons, visited the President of the United States, remonstrated against the injustice of said order, and requested a modification of the same, and from the kindly response there seemed reason to hope that the desired relief would be granted;

But whereas, notwithstanding the President's expressed sympathy and interest, this same official has recently (January 13) replied to this and other similar requests by another order making a

few slight and almost useless "concessions," but declining in any *essential* respect to change or modify his former objectionable order, and again positively *prohibiting the use of the Dakota (or other Indian) Bible in all schools* among the Indians : Therefore

Resolved by the Lafayette County Bible Society :

1. That this order, *while excellent in its general purpose*, yet seems in some of its provisions to be harsh, unjust, and even cruel, by suddenly, and—in cases not a few entirely—depriving many Indians of all religious instruction that can be understood by them.

2. That that part of the order affecting missionary and private schools seems to us an unwarranted, if not illegal, interference with the rights of private individuals ; for never before in the history of our country, it is believed, has the Government, or, rather, a single officer of the Government, claimed the right to dictate to the citizen what shall be the substance, the kind, or the manner of the religious instruction he may either receive or give.

3. That this whole proceeding—in the exercise of an arbitrary one-man power, and in the almost tyrannical disregard of the protests and reasonable requests of a large number of intelligent and interested citizens—is such as might be expected in the more despotic countries of Europe and Asia, but not here in free, enlightened America. And we, as citizens, raise our respectful, but earnest, protest against it.

And 4. That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to the President of the United States, to our Senators, Messrs. Cockrell and Vest, and to our Representative in Congress, Hon. William Warner.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,

Washington, April 6, 1888.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR :

SIR : I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the letter of Hon. F. M. Cockrell, inclosing resolutions of Lafayette County Bible Society protesting against an order of the Indian Office regarding the teaching of In-

dian languages, referred by you to this office, and referring thereto, I have to respectfully advise you that I have read the resolutions carefully and find that this society, evidently not in possession of the facts, has based its protest upon the assumption that it forbids the use of the Bible in the Dakota language, which assumption is entirely unwarranted by any act or word of mine.

I deem it but proper to give, for your information, a brief summary of the action of the Indian Office regarding the teaching of the English language in Indian schools, and to call attention to the fact that the idea of compelling instruction in that language to the exclusion of the vernacular is not a new one.

As far back as 1868, the commission known as the "Peace Commission," composed of Generals Sherman, Harney, Sanborn, and Terry, and Messrs. Taylor (then Commissioner of Indian Affairs), Henderson, Tappan, and Augur, embodied in the report of their investigations into the condition of Indian tribes their matured and pronounced views on this subject, from which I make the following extracts:

The white and Indian must mingle together and jointly occupy the country, or one of them must abandon it. * * * What prevented their living together? * * * The difference in language, which in a great measure barred intercourse and a proper understanding each of the other's motives and intentions. Now, by educating the children of these tribes in the English language, these differences would have disappeared and civilization would have followed at once. Nothing then would have been left but the antipathy of race, and that, too, is always softened in the beams of a higher civilization. * * * Through sameness of language is produced sameness of sentiment and thought; customs and habits are molded and assimilated in the same way, and thus in process of time the differences producing trouble would have been gradu-

ally obliterated. By civilizing one tribe others would have followed. Indians of different tribes associate with each other on terms of equality; they have not the Bible, but their religion, which we call superstition, teaches them that the Great Spirit made us all. In the difference of language to-day lies two-thirds of our trouble. * * * Schools should be established which children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted. * * * The object of greatest solicitude should be to break down the prejudices of tribe among the Indians; to blot out the boundary lines which divide them into distinct nations, and fuse them into one homogeneous mass. Uniformity of language will do this; nothing else will.

In the regulations of the Indian Bureau, issued by the Indian Office in 1880, for the guidance of Indian agents occurs this paragraph:

All instruction must be in English, except in so far as the native language of the pupils shall be a necessary medium for conveying the knowledge of English, and the conversation of and communications between the pupils and with the teacher must be, as far as practicable, in English.

The following is an extract from the report of the Hon. Hiram Price, late Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in the first annual report made by him in 1881:

The first two school years, at least, must be spent mainly in acquiring the English language and the white man's way of living lessons which the child of civilized parents learns in the nursery, and in these two branches progress is impeded by the reluctance of Indians to use any but their native tongue, and is seriously interrupted by the annual vacation which returns the children to the old ways of speech, thought, and life. * * * * * *He must be compelled to adopt the English language;* must be so placed that attendance at school shall be regular, and that vacations shall not be periods of retrogression, and must breathe the atmosphere of a civilized instead of a barbarous or semi-barbarous community.

In 1884 the following order was issued by Secretary Teller to the office, being called out by the report that

in one of the schools instruction was being given in both Dakota and English :

You will please inform the authorities of this school that the English language only must be taught the Indian youth placed there for educational and industrial training at the expense of the Government. If Dakota or any other language is taught such children they will be taken away and their support by the Government will be withdrawn from the school.

In the report of this office for 1885 incidental allusion was made to the importance of teaching Indians the English language, the paragraph being as follows :

A wider and better knowledge of the English language among them is essential to their comprehension of the duties and obligations of citizenship. At this time but few of the adult population can speak a word of English, but with the efforts now being made by the Government, and by religious and philanthropic associations and individuals, especially in the Eastern States, with the missionary and the school-master industriously in the field everywhere among the tribes, it is to be hoped, and it is confidently believed, that among the next generation of Indians the English language will be sufficiently spoken and used to enable them to become acquainted with the laws, customs, and institutions of our country.

In my report of 1886 I reiterated the thought of my previous report, and clearly outlining my attitude and policy, I said :

In my first report I expressed very decidedly the idea that Indians should be taught the English language only. From that position I believe, so far as I am advised, there is no dissent, either among the law-makers or the executive agents who are selected under the law to do the work. There is not an Indian pupil whose tuition and maintenance is paid for by the United States Government who is permitted to study any other language than our own vernacular, the language of the greatest, most powerful, and enterprising nationalities beneath the sun. The English language as taught in America is good enough for all her people of all races.

Longer and closer consideration of the subject has only deepened my conviction that it is a matter not only of importance, but of necessity, that the Indians acquire the English language as rapidly as possible. The Government has entered upon the great work of educating and citizenizing the Indians and establishing them upon homesteads. The adults are expected to assume the rôle of citizens, and of course the rising generation will be expected and required more nearly to fill the measure of citizenship, and the main purpose of educating them is to enable them to read, write, and speak the English language and to transact business with English-speaking people. When they take upon themselves the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship their vernacular will be of no advantage. Only through the medium of the English tongue can they acquire a knowledge of the Constitution of the country and their rights and duties thereunder.

The following is a copy of the final order of this office :

1. No text-books in the vernacular will be allowed in any school where children are placed under contract, or where the Government contributes, in any manner whatever, to the support of the school; no oral instruction in the vernacular will be allowed at such schools. The entire curriculum must be in the English language.

2. The vernacular may be used in missionary schools, only for oral instruction in morals and religion, where it is deemed to be an auxiliary to the English language in conveying such instruction ; and only native Indian teachers will be permitted to otherwise teach in any Indian vernacular ; and these native teachers will only be allowed so to teach in schools not supported in whole or in part by the Government, and at remote points, where there are no Government or contract schools where the English language is taught. These native teachers are only allowed to teach in the vernacular with a view of reaching those Indians who can not have the advantages

of instruction in English, and such instruction must give way to the English-teaching schools as soon as they are established where the Indians can have access to them.

3. A limited theological class of Indian young men may be trained in the vernacular at any purely missionary school, supported exclusively by missionary societies, the object being to prepare them for the ministry, whose subsequent work shall be confined to preaching, unless they are employed as teachers in remote settlements, where English schools are inaccessible.

4. These rules are not intended to prevent the possession or use by any Indian of the Bible published in the vernacular, but such possession or use shall not interfere with the teaching of the English language to the extent and in the manner hereinbefore directed.

Shortly after the order was issued a great outcry was raised in certain quarters, and by a systematic series of misrepresentations the impression has been created among many good people that the order was an unparadonably atrocious act on the part of the Indian Commissioner, and many bitter denunciations have been received, the main burden of which seems to be that I have forbidden the use of the Scriptures in the vernacular. This assertion is absolutely without foundation, and I have repeatedly so stated.

I respectfully call your attention to the fact that it is expressly stated in rule 4 that—

These rules are not intended to prevent the possession or use by any Indian of the Bible published in the vernacular.

This order prohibits the use of the vernacular as part of the curriculum, either by text-books or orally, in any school to whose support the Government contributes, but it is admissible when necessary to use words in the vernacular to communicate a knowledge of English.

It prohibits the vernacular in any school supported without Government assistance except for oral instruc-

tion in morals and religion, with two exceptions: (1) That native Indians may teach in the vernacular other branches than morals and religion in schools located in settlements remote from any school in which English is taught, and (2) that a limited theological class of Indian young men may be trained in the vernacular, with the object of fitting them to be preachers or teachers in remote schools.

The order does *not* apply to adult Indians, but only to children, which is construed to mean youth between 6 and 16 years of age.

The order does *not* affect preaching or praying, or the maintenance or conduct of religious service of any description, at any time or place, in any language.

The order does *not* prevent the ownership or use by any Indian of the Bible in any language, nor the circulation, sale, or gift of the Bible in any language by any society, to Indians of any age, in or out of school.

The order *does* prohibit the use of text-books in the vernacular as a part of the curriculum in schools for secular education, but words in the vernacular are allowed to be used, in aid of the English, in expounding the Holy Bible in any school. With this explanatory construction of the order this office adheres firmly to its original design that the *curriculum of secular education must be in English*.

Good and well-meaning people have been made to believe that the operations and usefulness of that great agent of civilization and Christianity, the American Bible Society, was ruthlessly assaulted by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the issuance and enforcement of these orders. The idea is too ridiculous and absurd to be seriously treated. Nevertheless, my great

respect for the motives of even those who have suffered themselves to be thus imposed upon induces me to notice that charge briefly. How does the order possibly lessen the number of Bibles distributed? The distribution will be enhanced by the order, beyond a doubt, since all must admit that those Indian children who learn English will much more likely become readers of the Bible than those that learn only the vernacular.

Query: If children are taught in the English language does any one suppose that it does not furnish to the Bible Society as good a market for distribution, sale, or gift of the Bible? Or will it be contended that the English Bible is not as sacred and divine a book as a Bible printed in the Dakota, which, if confined to the Dakota language, must necessarily leave out much of the book because of the paucity of words to express the ideas? I am informed by people who speak that language that it is so imperfect that words have to be coined to enable many of the ideas that are contained in the Bible to be expressed in Dakota. The simple Dakota fails to express the idea.

I am persuaded that the adverse criticisms upon the action of the Indian Office with reference to this subject have arisen from misapprehension of the facts. Various religious denominations and the American Bible Society seem to understand that an effort has been made by the Indian Office to curtail religious instruction and the distribution of the Bible, when nothing was further from the intent of the office or the intent and meaning of the order. Hearing that these privileges have been trampled upon by the Indian Office, in their zeal they strike in the dark. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs has been denounced as a

tyrant and a despot, and has been likened in his autocracy to the King of Dahomey, and that, too, by persons whose profession it is to teach charity. I leave it to the sense of justice of all fair-minded people whether such epithets and charges are merited.

I respectfully call your attention to the fact that the order forbids the *teaching* in *any* of the numerous Indian languages. The memorialists and many others act upon the supposition that it was aimed at that particular language known as the Dakota. Nothing is further from the truth.

There are sixty-five languages among the Indians in the United States and Territories, each as distinct from the other as is Hebrew from Chinese or English. Each of these languages is divided into numerous dialects, in some cases as many as twenty, and each of these dialects is as distinct from all the others as is English from Italian or French from German. These languages may be, and no doubt are, interesting to the philologist, but as a medium for conveying education and civilization to savages they are worse than useless; they are a means of keeping them in their savage condition by perpetuating the traditions of carnage and superstition.

The committee, composed of Dr. Strieby, Dr. Ellinwood, and others, who waited upon the President (and who were referred by him to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs) to see if an understanding could not be reached between the committee and the Commissioner, accordingly called upon me and submitted in writing a request for such modifications of the order as they deemed essential to the advancement of missionary work among the Indians, to which request the Commissioner assented, and the modifications were accordingly made; but the

assertion having been made that the order was an unwarranted interference with the religious teaching of certain missionary bodies, various synods, conferences, and religious associations have protested against it, without taking the trouble to ascertain if their protests were based on facts.

I respectfully call your attention to the fact that the only religious society that has taken the trouble to ascertain all the facts before acting, assembled in the city of Baltimore early in March. The conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church appointed a committee on "the subject of the use of religious literature in the Indian dialects," which committee obtained from this office information as to the true position taken by the Commissioner. Having obtained the facts, and consequently being able to act intelligently, the following report was made, as reported in the daily press:

Rev. C. Herbert Richardson, in the report of the special committee to which was referred the subject of the use of religious literature in the Indian dialects among the North American Indians, stated that, while the Commissioner of Indian Affairs had ordered the instruction of Indians on reservations to be in English, that order did not apply to the teaching of the Gospel. The order did not intend to prevent Indians from possessing copies of the Bible in their vernacular. It had also been learned by the committee that the mission schools were free to give the Indians religious instruction in any way they saw fit to adopt. The report was adopted.

I respectfully call attention to this for the purpose of showing the difference between the action taken when the truth is under consideration and that which results from the discussion of distorted and emasculated statements of the scope and purport of the order.

I am gratified to be able to state that the order has been properly understood and approved by many of the

most prominent educators and friends of the Indian race. I take the liberty of quoting from a few of the letters received in this office.

The first two are from Captain Pratt, superintendent of the Carlisle Indian Training School, as follows:

August 22, 1887.—I wish you would cause to be sent to me all the orders or circulars in reference to teaching English in Indian schools, both Government and mission. The *Christian Union* and the *Advance* of last week boil over on the subject, and their boiling is fired by the same hand. The Department is right, I don't care how stringent the orders. The first wall to be knocked down is the wall of language, and I'd like to make some answer for our side. I can do it better if I know just what the orders are.

September 3, 1887.—I wish to say personally that in my judgment your order about English in the schools ought not to be abated one jot. In the near future the very missionaries who oppose it will thank you for it.

There is more of Indian emancipation in it than in the land-in-severalty law. The abolition of all interpreters as paid medium of intercourse would be a real blessing to the service at almost every agency.

The following is from the Rev. G. A. Jameson, a clergyman of the denomination which has been principally active in opposing the order:

August 1, 1887.—I perceive the Republican, and considerable portions of the religious press of the country, are making a great outcry against your Indian educational policy among the Sioux.

As I understand it, your policy is to have the Indian taught English instead of his mother tongue; this being the case, a word of encouragement from one who has been on the ground as a missionary may not come amiss.

Be encouraged to keep close to your present policy—abate not one jot or tittle of it. The Republicans, before you came to administer the affairs of the country, thought well to undertake similar work in the Government schools, but lacked the courage to touch the work of the mission schools where it was most needed. If the wisdom of such work was recognized in the Government schools, why not recognize the wisdom of making it general?

When I was in Dakota among the Sioux I was much impressed with the grave injustice done the Indian in all matters of trade, because he could not speak the language in which all trade was transacted. This step will help him out of the difficulty and lift him a long way nearer equality with the white man. I am glad you have had the courage to take this step, and I hope you may find that support which the justice and righteousness of the step you have taken deserves.

I am a Congregational pastor, and pastor of a church which helps the association to which the schools affected belong, and while I respect, very highly, the Riggs brothers of Santee and Oahe, I must entertain an opinion directly the opposite of theirs on this question. They are, perhaps, more immediately interested in this matter than any others I know of, unless it be the Indian in question; but what are they, or the school they control, to the welfare of thousands of Indian men and women who are daily robbed by unscrupulous white men because they have no means of learning the value of things in the white man's market—the only market open to the Indian for his peltries and wares? And besides I have confidence to believe your policy will make their schools vastly better than they now are, besides immeasurably bettering the condition of the red man.

* * * * *

As to the cry of the religious press about not being able to reach many of the Indians unless one come to them in their own tongue, I have it to say, the Indian will learn our tongue as readily as he will acquire a knowledge of his own written language—a condition of things vastly better for the Indian than the opposite.

* * * * *

In conclusion, let me assure you of my hearty support in your present Indian policy, and if you know of anything I can do to facilitate its workings I shall be glad to be your obedient servant.

The following is taken from a letter written by Horace R. Chase, superintendent of the Indian training-school at Genoa, Nebr.:

September 23, 1887.—It may be beyond my position, but I trust I may be pardoned in expressing to you my firm and candid belief that you are right in the position you have taken in this matter.

You certainly have my best thoughts for your course and determination, and my earnest endeavors here to enforce your ruling and instructions. The arguments of the opposition are not well taken, and come with little grace. There can be no objection to religious instructions in churches to the adults, but the children *must learn English*. Allow the speaking of Indian to continue at the schools, and so much farther removed is the solution of this very important question.

The following is from a letter written by William V. Lewis, principal of Lincoln Institution :

October 27, 1837.—Your recent order prohibiting the teaching of the Indian language in the schools meets with my hearty approval, and as near as I can learn the intelligent Indian pupils of our school are with you. The policy of the Government is to civilize the wild Indians and make good American citizens of them. Can this be done by building up separate nations with different languages amongst us? Most certainly not. The greatest obstacle in the way of Indian civilization is the barbarous language of the people. The fact that each tribe has a different vernacular is one great cause of the jealousy and enmity amongst them. The Indian Department can do the Indian youth no greater service than to teach them all the language of our country. To bar them from American literature and the competition of white people, by allowing them to be taught their own language, would work injury to them in the end.

The following is from Maj. James McLaughlin, an Indian agent of long experience, who has been exceedingly active in pushing the educational interests of his Indians :

September 22, 1837.—Seeing there is now being considerable said in the public press about the Indian Office prohibiting the teaching of the vernacular to the Indians in Indian schools, and having been connected with the Indian service for the past sixteen years, eleven years of which I have been Indian agent and had schools under my charge, I desire to state that I am a strong advocate of instruction to Indians in the English language only, as being able to read and write in the vernacular of the tribe is but little use to

them. Nothing can be gained by teaching Indians to read and write in the vernacular, as their literature is limited, and much valuable time would be lost in attempting it. Furthermore, I have found the vernacular of the Sioux very misleading, while a full knowledge of the English enables the Indians to transact business as individuals, and to think and act for themselves independently of each other.

As I understand it, the order applies to children of school-going ages (from six to sixteen years) only, and that missionaries are at liberty to use the vernacular in religious instructions. This is essential in explaining the precepts of the Christian religion to adult Indians who do not understand English.

In my opinion schools conducted in the vernacular are detrimental to civilization. They encourage Indians to adhere to their time-honored customs and inherent superstitions which the Government has in every way sought to overcome, and which can only be accomplished by adopting uniform rules requiring instruction in the English language exclusively.

The following is the copy of a letter received from J. F. B. Marshall, in charge of the Indian educational work of the American Unitarian Association :

February 18, 1883.—I am in receipt of your communication of 11th instant, with copy of the rules forwarded to Indian agents, prohibiting the use of the vernacular in Indian schools, with which rules we shall cheerfully comply.

Whatever reasons the denominations which have been longer in Indian school work may have for objecting to this prohibition, our own is in entire accord with the decision of the Indian Office in this matter.

The following is an extract from the annual report for 1887 of Charles E. McChesney, agent at the Cheyenne River Agency :

Under the recent order of the Department the schools, under charge of Rev. Mr. Riggs, taught in the vernacular, will have to be either discontinued or taught in English exclusively. For educational purposes the wisdom of the order, in my judgment, can not well be questioned. To teach the rising generation of the

Sioux in their native tongue is simply to teach the perpetuation of something that can be of no benefit whatever to them. The amount of learning they could acquire in their native tongue is necessarily very limited, and then, if I understand the matter, the object is to make these Indians an English-speaking people, and surely it has been abundantly demonstrated that in order to teach them English it is not necessary nor is it any material advantage to them to have received instruction in their native tongue. On the contrary, it is held by many that the children's previous instruction in Sioux retards their progress in English.

Superintendent Chase, of the Genoa Training School, in his annual report, says :

There is yet another matter deserving of more than passing notice. I refer to the use of the Indian tongue. There can not be any question about the wisdom of teaching English exclusively. Experience proves that progress is greater, quicker, more reliable, and more beneficial when the language is common. The control of the children is much easier, and their willingness to adopt our ways more perceptible. They are deprived of nothing ; they lose nothing. The quicker they are made to understand that they must acquire not only our ways but our language, the more readily will our purpose be accomplished.

From the annual report of William W. Anderson, of Crow Creek Agency, the following is taken :

The children do not inherit habits of thought and mind-training as do the whites, and besides, are placed at the disadvantage of hearing the Indian language spoken all around by parents, relatives, and friends. But the schools are doing good work, and under your instructions to discourage the use of the Indian language to the utmost limit still better results will follow.

Agent Kinney, of Yankton Agency, speaking of one of the mission schools, says :

In this school the Dakota language is taught and claimed to be in the interests of the church. The recent circular of the Acting Commissioner requires all education to be in English where the Government provides aid, ignoring the vernacular. * * * The circular is a step, in my opinion, timely and eminently useful.

The last annual report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, composed of the following well-named friends of the Indian—Clinton B. Fisk, E. Whittlesey, Albert K. Smiley, William McMichael, Merrill E. Gates, John Charlton, William H. Morgan, James Lidgerwood, William H. Waldby, William D. Walker—in alluding to this matter, on pages 11 and 12, contains the following language:

English vs. vernacular.

On the question of teaching the English language exclusively in the Indian schools, this board is already on record substantially indorsing the recent orders of the Indian Bureau, which have been subjected to much discussion and criticism. Ten years ago, in our report for 1877, we said :

“Another measure essential to any good results is a common school education. We would emphasize the importance of teaching Indian youth to speak and read the English language. If they are ever to be enfranchised as American citizens they must have some knowledge of the common language of the country. We recommend, therefore, that funds appropriated for education shall not be expended for the support of schools in which Indian languages are the exclusive medium of instruction.”

Again, in 1881, alluding to the order of Commissioner Price, we said :

“The policy adopted of teaching only English in the Government schools is eminently wise. To live in friendly relations with his neighbors and to transact the ordinary business of life, to become a useful American citizen, the Indian must know the common language of the country. Many keen-witted Indians see this. Said an old chief in Oregon : ‘My father left me 1,400 ponies; if he had sold the ponies and sent me to school to learn white man’s talk I should be better off now.’ We have visited reservations where schools have been in operation sixty years, and yet we were obliged to address the people through an interpreter.

“‘We can not afford,’ it has been said, ‘to raise any more Indians in this country.’ And yet, accepting the old fiction that Indians are foreigners, we have already raised two generations

of Indians by unwise theories of education, and have kept them in isolation, shut up from intercourse with civilized communities about them by the strongest and highest possible wall of partition. A better system is now in use, and we trust the time is not far distant when English books and the English language will be exclusively taught in Indian schools."

We see no reason to revoke or to modify these words. The new life upon which the Indian is now entering makes an English education more important to him than ever before. The recent orders may seem somewhat sweeping and arbitrary, especially in their application to those schools which are supported by mission boards or by Indians without expense to the Government, but they have been greatly misunderstood. They have been interpreted to forbid the preaching of the Gospel and all religious exercises in the vernacular. Some of the officers of the Department appear to have given them this construction. It is reported that United States Inspector Bannister, in October last, directed the Rev. Thomas L. Riggs, missionary in Dakota, to close the mission day-schools on the Cheyenne River, with the further injunction that even if no school is kept daily religious services (in Dakota) will not be allowed. Some other instances of this kind are reported. We do not believe that such extreme action was intended or is justified by the orders of the Indian Office. We are sure there is no wish to restrict, in any way, religious liberty, or to interfere with religious exercises.

The orders as we read them refer to schools attended by children, and they forbid the teaching of such children to read and write the Indian language; they forbid the teaching of grammar, geography, arithmetic, and other branches of common-school education in the vernacular, and of course the use of school books printed in the vernacular. They require that English shall be the language of conversation in the schools, but it would be an extreme construction to say that the teacher must never explain the meaning of an English word by the use of the vernacular if he is able to use it. With regard to the few small mission schools on reservations which have no Government support, we are inclined to think that the orders might be wisely modified or suspended until those who support such schools can make arrangements to employ English teachers. [In a foot-note to the report it is stated: "The

orders have been modified by Commissioner Atkins."] The school facilities being now sufficient for only about one-third of the Indian children of school age, every effort for their education should be welcomed. A little teaching even in the vernacular is better than no instruction. At the same time we would urge the mission boards to conform, as soon as possible, to the wishes of the Indian Commissioner. All admit that the English language must be brought to the front at the earliest possible moment. All admit the wisdom of requiring its exclusive use in the Government schools. If an English education is best for the 14,000 pupils enrolled in Government, why is it not best for the 400 pupils enrolled in the mission schools?

The above extracts are the words of gentlemen who have studied the subject in all its bearings, and who have taken the trouble to ascertain the facts before reaching a conclusion.

In my annual report for 1887 I call attention to the misrepresentations regarding the order in the following language:

I have given the text of these orders in detail, because various misrepresentations and complaints in regard to them have been made, and various misunderstandings seem to have arisen. They do not, as has been urged, touch the question of the preaching of the gospel in the churches, nor in any wise hamper or hinder the efforts of missionaries to bring the various tribes to a knowledge of the Christian religion. Preaching of the gospel to Indians in the vernacular is, of course, not prohibited. In fact, the question of the effect of this policy upon any missionary body was not considered. All the office insists upon is that in the schools established for the rising generation of Indians shall be taught the language of the Republic of which they are to become citizens.

In a letter to the honorable Secretary of the Interior, dated December 28, 1887, I stated that—

There is no disposition or intention to interfere with religious instruction in the vernacular, and that those adult Indians who have learned the so-called Dakota language can read the Scriptures or any other books in that language, and there is no disposition to interfere with them. The rising generation, however, will

not be allowed to waste their time in learning to read and write a language which is of no use to them, and which is a positive bar to their progress and civilization. In other words, the intention is to prevent the waste of valuable time by Indian children in schools in learning a barbarous tongue which is not comprehensive enough to embrace civilization or to comprehend it, and to utilize that time in school in learning the language of the country of which they are to become citizens—a language in which not only the Scriptures can be read, but all the extensive literature of the civilized world.

I would respectfully state that the orders referred to interpose no objection whatever to the distribution of the Bible to, or its use in any language by, any people, and the inference of the memorialists that the order is so intended is not warranted by the facts.

In a letter to Hon. Clinton B. Fisk, dated September 5, 1887, I used the following language:

The rule promulgated by this office does not forbid the teaching of the truths of Scripture or any other truths to adult Indians, who cannot understand English, in their own language. It simply forbids the teaching of reading and writing in the vernacular to Indians *in schools*.

I am fully aware of the noble efforts of the missionaries of various religious denominations to civilize and educate the Indians, and I heartily appreciate the good work they have done and are doing, but I am thoroughly convinced that the Indian can not become a useful civilized citizen unless he is educated in the English language. This is the language of our country and the only language which will be useful to the rising generation, who are expected to become citizens. The law providing for the taking of land in severalty contemplates that the Indian shall become a citizen, and in order to properly perform the duties of citizenship he should be familiar with the language of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic. The teaching of the savage vernacular is a waste of valuable time, and is a bar to the progress of the Indian toward civilization.

There is no intention or wish to interfere in any manner with the noble work of the missionaries among the Indians, but that work should be conducted with a view of converting the savage into an industrious, self-supporting, self-respecting citizen of our

English-speaking Republic, and in the light of past experience, and in accordance with the opinions of many of the ablest and most earnest friends of the race, I believe this can only be done by teaching the rising generation in such a manner that they can be assimilated as useful members of the body politic; "uniformity of language will do this; nothing else will."

I sincerely hope that all friends of Indian education will unite in the good work of teaching the English language only, and discourage in every way possible the perpetuation of any Indian vernacular.

The following is an extract from a letter to M. H. Bright, of New York, editor of the *Christian at Work* :

Great misapprehension seems to exist in the minds of many people as to the intention of the order, and it has been asserted that the effect will be to break up missionary work among the Indians.

This office fully appreciates the noble work which has been done in the past and which is being done at present by devoted missionaries of different religious denominations, in striving to elevate the Indian, and there is no intention to interfere in any manner with purely missionary work, but it is my firm conviction that there can be no real civilization in the barbarous vernacular of any Indian tribe. The severalty law contemplates that the Indian shall become a useful citizen of the United States, and he cannot properly perform the duties of citizenship unless he is familiar with the language of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic.

It is not expected that the adult Indian will learn any other language than that which is sufficient for his barbarous tastes and habits, but the rising generation can be educated in a language which will fit them to become assimilated with the people of the United States, and make them useful members of the body politic. The time spent in learning the vernacular is valuable time wasted.

In a letter to a missionary on one of the reservations, dated September 10, 1887, the following language is used :

Referring to that part of your letter in which you state that "preach the Gospel to every creature" means Indians, too, and that

you would not stop your "work of giving the Gospel to them even for the fear of a fiery furnace," I take pleasure in assuring you that I have no disposition to prevent your preaching the Gospel or any other truths to the Indians; on the contrary, I wish you all success and God-speed in such a commendable work, but, inasmuch as you seem to misconstrue a rule of this office which forbids the teaching of any vernacular in an Indian school, I will state that the order applies only to Indians of school age on an Indian reservation. Those adult Indians who have learned the so-called Dakota language can read the Scriptures or any other books in that barbarous language if they wish, and there is no disposition to interfere with them.

I have given, at some length, the views of this office as expressed at different times to different people interested in the Indian question. From many of the most eminent people who are familiar with the subject I have received letters of congratulation on the advanced steps taken to civilize these people by compelling them to learn a language which will be useful to them, and I am satisfied that the opposition is caused by a misrepresentation of facts and a manifest distortion of the true intent of the order. I do not wish to be understood as saying that these memorialists have been guilty of misrepresentation; in fact, I believe otherwise, but I do say that they have acted upon a construction of the order which is not warranted.

Very respectfully,

J. D. C. ATKINS,
Commissioner.

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